Cooke Hydroelectric Plant, Attendant's House
Cooke Dam Road at the Au Sable River
Oscoda Vicinity
Iosco County
Michigan

HAER No. MI-98-G

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Mid-Atlantic Regional Office
Department of the Interior
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

COOKE HYDROELECTRIC PLANT, Attendant's House

HAER No. MI-98-G

Location: 1201 Cooke Dam Road
Oscoda Vicinity
Iosco County, Michigan

UTM: 17:295410:4927200
Quad: Sid Town, Mich., 1:24,000

Date of Construction: 1909

Engineer: William G. Fargo, Fargo Engineering, Jackson, Michigan

Present Owner: David L. and Deborah L. Hicks

Present Use: Private home

Significance: The house was built around 1909 to provide on-site accommodations for plant operators, due to the isolated nature of the site at the turn of the century. Access to the plant at that time was either by an eighteen-mile wagon road or by a sixteen-mile, narrow-gauge logging railroad.

Project Information: This documentation was prepared by Consumers Power Company (CPCo) in conformance with its Cultural Resources Management Plan for the Au Sable River Hydroelectric Projects (July 1995). The plan stipulated the recordation of the entire Cooke Hydroelectric Plant (according to the standards of the Historic American Engineering Record) as mitigation for the planned rehabilitation of the plant's concrete spillway. The documentation was completed in 1996 by Hess, Roise and Company of Minneapolis under contract with CPCo. Jeffrey A. Hess served as Principal Investigator and Cynthia de Miranda as Project Historian. Project photography was completed under a subcontract with Hess Roise by Clayton B. Fraser of Loveland, Colorado.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Attendant's House, a two-and-one-half story, wood-frame, front-gabled structure, sits on the right bank of the Au Sable River, south of the Cooke Hydroelectric Plant (HAER No. MI-98). Built around 1909 to provide on-site accommodations for plant operators, the house has a simple, square plan and little ornament. An enclosed front porch with a pedimented roof and modern windows spans the first floor of the main (east) facade.[1] The house is sheathed in two colors of aluminum siding: yellow on the first story and brown above. White cornice molding trims the boxed eaves on the side (north and south) walls. A shed-roofed addition to the rear (west side) of the house enclosed and expanded the rear porch so that it spans the width of the house. A sliding glass door in the addition's rear (west) wall opens to a wooden deck.

The roof of the house is moderately pitched and covered with brown asphalt shingles. A pedimented dormer window graces the south side. A brick chimney rises from the center of the structure. Modern replacement sash fills all the windows.[2]

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[1] While the Attendant's House more accurately faces northeast, this description is written to reflect approximate full cardinal points for the sake of clarity.

[2] This description is based on a site survey completed by the authors on 27 July 1995.

HISTORY

William G. Fargo, civil engineer for the Cooke Hydroelectric Plant (HAER No. MI-98) project, designed two Attendant's Houses in addition to the dam and power plant. The houses were built in 1909 as dwellings for the plant's operators, perhaps due to the isolated nature of the site at the turn of the century. The nearest town in Cooke's early years was sixteen miles to the east. Access to the plant site was either by an eighteen-mile wagon road or by a narrow-gauge logging railroad. Housing the plant operators at the site was convenient and efficient.

The two houses were nearly identical in design, the only difference being the alignment of the gable roof. The house nearer to the plant sported a side-gabled roof with a dormer window on the main (east) facade. The second house was built with a front-gabled roof; its single dormer window ornamented the south facade. Otherwise, both houses had two-and-one-half stories sheathed with horizontal wood siding on the first story and wood shingles above. The gabled roofs were shingled as well. Pedimented front porches with round columns and covered rear porches also graced each home; tin roofing capped the porches. The homes' columns and pedimented front porches evoked the Classical Revival style.

Windows, with the exception of those in the top story, were double hung with single lights. The dormer window in each house held a paired set of nine-light windows, while the gable walls displayed paired sets of six-over-six double hung windows in their top stories. The houses had identical floor plans, which included four bedrooms, one bathroom, a kitchen, a dining room, a living room, and a spare room at the front of the house.[3]

Construction photographs show that the houses were among the first structures erected at the Cooke site. During the construction period, the dwellings may have been occupied by Fargo or by the project's electrical engineer, J.B. Foote. Company executives visiting the site may have lodged there as well.

The houses may have continued to serve as operators' dwellings until the early 1970s. The side-gabled home was removed from the Cooke plant, perhaps around that time, and the remaining house was sold in 1972 as a private residence to Bill and Mary Schultz. It is no longer associated with the plant. The house has undergone a number of changes, including the application of aluminum siding, installation of modern replacement windows, and

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[3] This description is based on Fargo's 1909 drawings for the houses and on views of the structures captured in construction photographs and early views of the completed project. See William G. Fargo, "Plans for Attendant's Houses—Cooke Site, Au Sable River, 10-23-09," Drawings 1605A and 1606A, from the homeowner, 1201 Cooke Dam Road, Oscoda, Michigan; and Cooke Hydroelectric Plant construction and overview photographs, Consumers Power Company, Hydro Operations, Cadillac, Michigan. Also see the following historic views appended to HAER No. MI-98: MI-98-4, MI-98-6, and MI-98-7; and MI-98-A-3 appended to HAER No. MI-98-A.

enclosure of the front porch. In addition, the rear porch was enclosed and enlarged to span the width of the house in 1981. A second bathroom was installed in the additional space. A deck has also been added to the rear of the structure.[4] In 1993, David and Deborah Hicks purchased the house from the Schultzes.

[4] David Hicks, 1201 Cooke Dam Road, Oscoda, Michigan , interview by Jeffrey A. Hess, Hess Roise and Company, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 27 July 1995.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

ENGINEERING DRAWING

Fargo, William G. "Plans for Attendant's Houses—Cooke Site, Au Sable River, 10-23-09." Drawings 1605A and 1606A. From the homeowner, 1201 Cooke Dam Road, Oscoda, Michigan.

HISTORIC VIEWS

Cooke Hydroelectric Plant construction and overview photographs. Consumers Power Company, Hydro Operations, Cadillac, Michigan.

INTERVIEW

Hicks, David, 1201 Cooke Dam Road, Oscoda, Michigan. Interview by Jeffrey A. Hess, Hess, Roise and Company, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 27 July 1995.